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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KPKO](#) [KTIP](#) [MOPS](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: FORCED LABOR BY THE FARDC

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Garvelink for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: FARDC troops are reportedly forcing civilians, including children, to act as their porters in North and South Kivu, according to the UN Joint Human Rights Office. The Human Rights Office has also observed new cases of rape and pillaging by FARDC troops. MONUC's support of the FARDC with food rations is problematic, as distribution points have become a focal point for forced labor commandeered by the FARDC. An environment of impunity will continue to grow within the FARDC as long as its capacity to police itself and carry out logistics remains weak. End Summary.

¶2. (C) FARDC troops frequently force civilians to act as porters and carry loads over long distances in North and South Kivu, according to Todd Howland, Director of the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO). Howland recently told PolOff that MONUC is currently providing food rations to FARDC troops in eight of twenty MONUC compounds in the region. Instead of providing transport or carrying their own food rations during troop movements, FARDC troops are forcing civilians, including children, at gunpoint to carry the rations over long distances. Those who resist are severely beaten. Some of the child porters are even retained by FARDC troops after they deliver the food. This phenomenon has caused local populations to move away from MONUC compounds, fearing they will be used as forced labor.

¶3. (U) At an April 22 human rights meeting with the diplomatic corps, Howland said that the UNJHRO has also observed new cases of rape and pillaging by FARDC soldiers in Maniema and North and South Kivu. He attributes the recent upswing in FARDC abuses to a greater concentration of FARDC troops in the east and to a greater frequency of FARDC troop movements. (Note: Howland said that there are currently 45,000 FARDC troops in North Kivu alone and that there is an ever changing command structure. End Note.)

¶4. (C) This situation has become very problematic for MONUC because it is obliged to support FARDC troops and also protect civilians. According to Howland, MONUC has discussed this problem internally and has decided to continue with the food rations, especially with the Kimia II operation on the verge of starting. He warned that MONUC risks becoming an accomplice to FARDC abuses.

¶5. (C) Comment: The forced labor accusations add to an already growing list of abuses being committed by FARDC troops. MONUC's dual mandate of supporting the FARDC and protecting civilians is a very delicate balancing act. An environment of impunity will continue to grow within the FARDC as long as command and control, logistics, lodging, and regular payment of salaries remain weak or non-existent. End Comment.

